

WRITING AN ANALYSIS OF AN AD OR A SHORT SEQUENCE FROM FILM OR TELEVISION

Describe in one sentence the theme or message of the sequence you are analyzing, and then another sentence or two to describe the main "action." If this sequence belongs to a genre, describe the genre conventions and how this short segment fits genre conventions. If the sequence is part of a larger work, tell where it fits in that work as a whole.

As you study to prepare to write, it is best to write a short description of each shot. Write down in one column, what is in the image, and in a parallel, what is on the sound track:

SHOT # ----- IMAGE----- SOUND

For each shot in the sequence or ad, analyze the connotative (emotional, suggestive, socially interpretable) aspects of the following formal elements. Tell what the director, has selected to show us, what s/he has decided to emphasize, and how s/he has created that emphasis. You can refer to any of the readings for clues on how to discuss the ways that sound and image suggest and emphasize emotion, and how they shape meaning.

Camera angle -- bird's eye, high, eye-level, low.

Shot distance -- extreme long shot, long shot, medium shot (two-shot or three-shot, over the shoulder shot), close up, extreme close up.

Shot/reverse shot patterns, eyeline match, point of view shots.

Lens -- especially the use of wide angle (deep focus).

Setting, costume, mise-en-scene -- Compare sets to other movie or television sets; note connotations of social class and income level or of masculinity and femininity. Private space (home) vs public space.

Characterization -- character types, moral and physical attributes, tone of voice, movements, gestures, degree of complexity or contradictory aspects, range of character types.

Composition within the frame -- Draw on readings for analytic strategies and terminology. This is a very important aspect of this kind of critical writing.

Camera movements -- Note recomposition of image created by camera movement, kind of movement?

Editing -- Draw on reading about editing for analytic concepts. Note organization of time, kinds of rhythm, and sense of movement created by editing. Are there contrasting or similar volumes, shapes, durations, design, lighting from one shot to the next? How

do editing strategies and sound strategies intermesh, especially in indicating vectors or directionality?

Lighting -- shadows and light areas. Bright or few shadows? Lit from below, from where? Light source indicated or not? Halo light?

Color -- symbolism or expressive quality

Acting -- spontaneity, improvisational, method acting, star playing self, character acting?

Sound -- draw on "Film Art" and "Television" for terms to use. Music -- instrumental or vocal. Tone of voice, how lines are delivered. Silences. Ambient sounds -- realistic or heightened. Sound bridges or overlapping sound -- ie, sound that begins before or after a cut.

Cross-references and intertextuality -- Note use of films, books, magazines, art, theatre, cabaret, outside references to history inside the film story

Projected audience -- age, expectations, habits, spending patterns, psychic needs, current events, social customs

Remember, for each shot, discuss the emotional or connotative aspects of each of these elements. If a shot repeats a previous set-up, note the recurring pattern.